

7. Covet the Lifestyle of the Rich and Famous

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

(1 John 2:15–17)

They are tanned, traveling, wealthy, and seemingly healthy. On top of this, they appear to be almost immune to the common pressures, hardships, and disappointments that most of humanity deals with.

Coveting the lifestyle of the rich and famous reflects a focus on the material, temporal, and often vain things of the here and now.

When this happens, discontentment and a loss of focus on the eternal things of God's kingdom will inevitably set in.

So who wouldn't want the lifestyle of the rich and famous? After all, there's nothing wrong with wanting to have good things and being able to go to interesting places, as well as experience much of what the world has to offer, is there? The answer is, absolutely not!

However, desiring such things (particularly acquiring wealth) becomes greatly problematic if we allow these desires to become a *primary focus* of our lives. The Lord Jesus warned

regarding this when he said, *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money”* (Matt 6:24).

The Apostle Paul echoed this by saying, *“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs”* (1 Tim 6:9–10).

He also equated the greedy desire for material things as being a form of idolatry when he said, *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5).¹

The desire to be rich can also produce in us an unwarranted discontentment, such as the psalmist experienced, *“But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills”* (Ps 73:2-5).

It can also influence us to embark on vain pursuits as well as make unwise financial spending decisions as the author of Ecclesiastes observed, *“And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person’s envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind”* (Eccl 4:4).

We may also be tempted to act wealthier than we actually are so that we live beyond our means. The book of Proverbs

¹ Cf. Eph 5:5.

tells us, *“One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing”* (Prov 13:7).

This yearning for the lifestyle of the rich and famous often comes from our own sinful pride and the innate desire to be idolized and deemed significant by others.

It can also originate and be heightened through various forms of media which often convey that this lifestyle is what defines a full and meaningful life and is worth striving for.

However, Jesus taught that he came to earth so that we may have a full and significant life through the salvation he provides. The Lord said, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (John 10:10).

How do we find this balance of legitimately desiring some of life’s great pleasures, but not letting this desire dominate the purpose of our lives? Here are a few suggestions.

Seek Treasures in Heaven. We must remember what the Lord Jesus so wisely said, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matt 6:19–21).

Thus, we should strive to make a difference in the world by seeking God’s kingdom first in our lives. When we do we show a heart oriented towards the place that true treasure resides and will accumulate.²

Overall, we would do well to echo this statement from the book of Proverbs, *“Keep falsehood and lies far from me;*

² Matt 6:9–10, 33.

give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Prov 30:8–9).

Know the True Source of Contentment. Admittedly, one of the greatest difficulties people of any economic level face is that of achieving true contentment. Ecclesiastes states, *"Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless"* (Eccl 5:10).³

But contentment can indeed be received as a gift from God. The Bible says, *"Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God"* (Eccl 5:19).

The experience of receiving true contentment as a gift, regardless of the situation, is something the Apostle Paul personally experienced. He wrote from prison, *"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength"* (Phil 4:12–13).

He also pointed out that *"Godliness with contentment is great gain"* (1 Tim 6:6).

King Solomon had the lifestyle of the rich and famous and much more.

Yet, he found it to be unsatisfying in comparison to fearing and serving God. We should take this to heart.

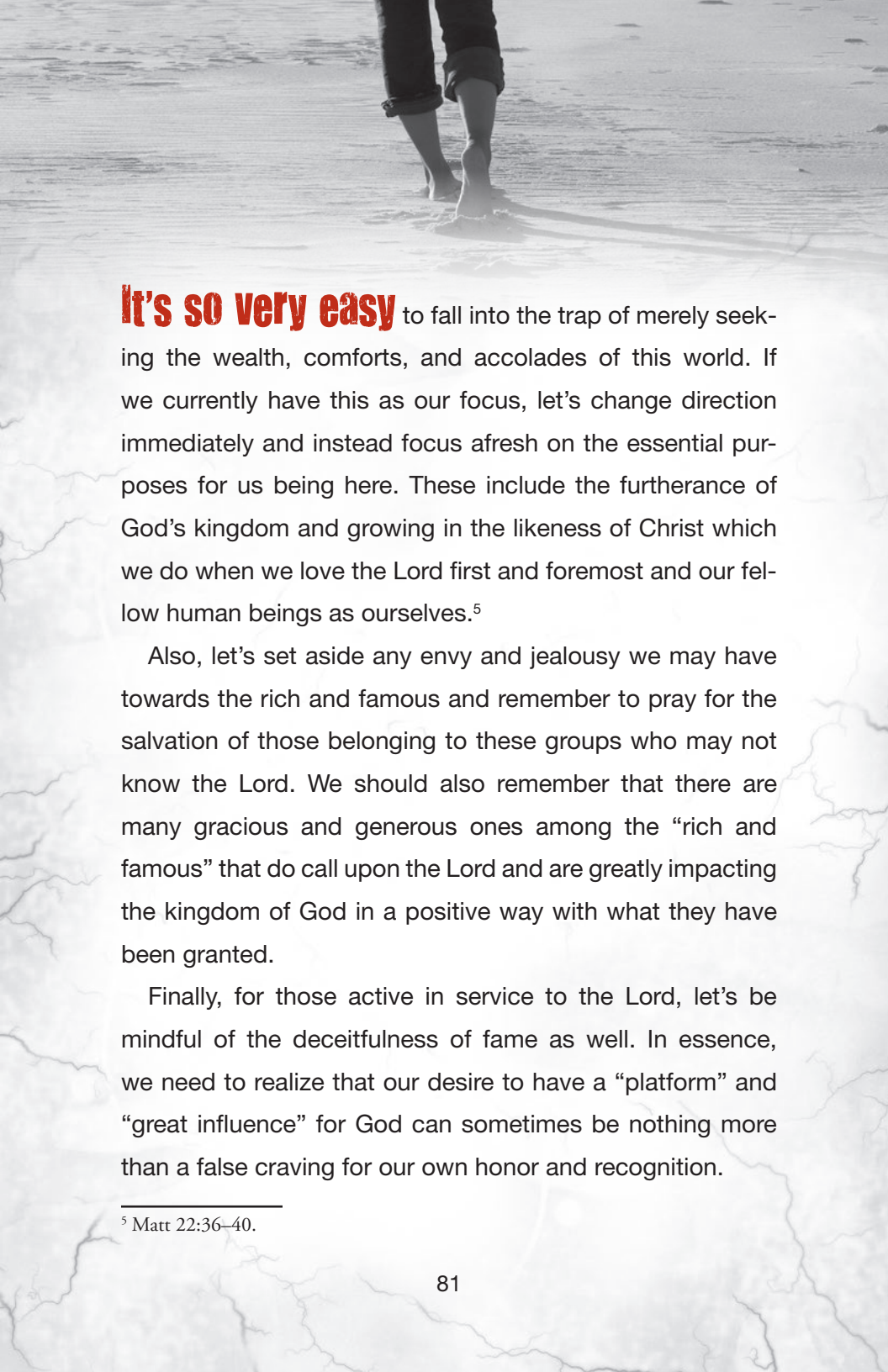
³ Cf. Eccl 6:1–2.

Understand the Necessity of Trials. Desiring the lifestyle of the rich and famous is often based on the incorrect belief that wealth will bring an existence virtually free from the common difficulties and hardships (particularly in the financial realm) that most people face.

However, we must know that the character God wishes to develop in us is often acquired through hardships and trials, especially as we depend on his grace, strength, and wisdom to get through them. The Bible says, “*We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope*” (Rom 5:3–4).⁴

Thus, we will experience hardships regardless of our economic status in order that we become the people of God we are supposed to be.

⁴ Cf. Jas 1:2–5.

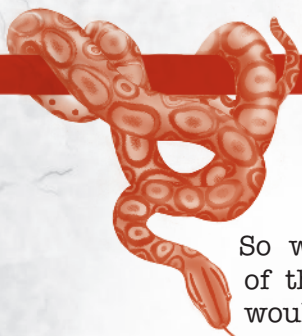


It's so very easy to fall into the trap of merely seeking the wealth, comforts, and accolades of this world. If we currently have this as our focus, let's change direction immediately and instead focus afresh on the essential purposes for us being here. These include the furtherance of God's kingdom and growing in the likeness of Christ which we do when we love the Lord first and foremost and our fellow human beings as ourselves.⁵

Also, let's set aside any envy and jealousy we may have towards the rich and famous and remember to pray for the salvation of those belonging to these groups who may not know the Lord. We should also remember that there are many gracious and generous ones among the "rich and famous" that do call upon the Lord and are greatly impacting the kingdom of God in a positive way with what they have been granted.

Finally, for those active in service to the Lord, let's be mindful of the deceitfulness of fame as well. In essence, we need to realize that our desire to have a "platform" and "great influence" for God can sometimes be nothing more than a false craving for our own honor and recognition.

⁵ Matt 22:36–40.



HOW TO DESTROY YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

So what's wrong with coveting the lifestyle of the rich and famous? Didn't God say you would be "blessed" if you followed him? As you may recall there's something in Luke 18 about getting houses and other stuff when you do. In essence, you may only be wishing for what you *deserve* anyway.

Now even though you may not "covet" (this is a pretty strong word after all) the lifestyle of the rich and famous, you might be legitimately wondering why they seem to be allowed to have so much heaven on earth. It just doesn't seem fair—especially when it appears many of them don't appear to care about God, whereas you do.

Besides, how are the rich and famous supposed to be reached with the gospel if people like you don't have these things as well? So, if you want to be a good witness to a broader range of people, start by focusing all your efforts on acquiring some wealth and recognition for yourself. This will prove that God richly blesses those who seek him and will cause others to desire him as well.

Another thing to consider is that if you got extremely wealthy, you're probably one of the few people who could actually handle it. No doubt you would remain totally focused on the Lord and determined to further his kingdom on earth. Plus, you would probably be super generous with your riches even though you may not be doing so with what you have right now.

So, in light of all that has been said, if anyone should be enjoying the lifestyle of the rich and famous—it may as well be you. So start going after it in the power of the Lord!